

2012

A Practical Handbook for Parent Involvement Committee Members

*Making a
Difference*

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Une publication équivalente est disponible en français sous le titre suivant :

Pour faire une différence : Guide pratique à l'intention des membres des Comités de participation des parents, 2012.

This publication is available on the Ministry of Education website, at www.ontario.ca/eduparents.

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Orientation:

Understanding the Big Picture

As a PIC member, you are making an important contribution to one of the finest education systems in the world. To support you in that role, this section of the handbook provides an overview of the policies that guide parent involvement in Ontario schools and school boards.

Provincial Goals for Education

Key Goals

Ontario has one of the finest education systems in the world. In order to continuously improve the education of its students, the province is focused on the following key goals:

- ◆ high levels of student achievement;
- ◆ reduced gaps in student achievement;
- ◆ high levels of public confidence in public education.



TOOLS AND RESOURCES

For a description of Ontario's education system, and the roles and responsibilities of education partners, visit the Ministry of Education website at www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/document/brochure/whosresp.html.

The Role of Parents

Parents have an important role to play in achieving these goals. Helping parents become involved in their children's learning – and in the life of our schools – is a key provincial priority.

Our schools have inherited a rich tradition of parent and community involvement in education. Parents have a primary influence on their children's attitudes towards school,

their learning, and their future success. There are many ways parents make a difference in their children's success at school: talking with their children about their day at school, making sure there is a quiet place set aside to do homework, reading with their children, meeting with teachers, or volunteering in the school or on school trips. Good schools become even better when there is a strong connection with parents as part of the learning community.



TOOLS AND RESOURCES

The ministry website includes links for parents, at www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/parents/links.html.

Research has shown that positive parental aspirations and expectations for their children's educational achievement have a strong relationship with children's actual achievement. The more support families provide for their children's learning and educational progress, the greater the likelihood that their children will do well in school and continue on with their education.²

PICs and school councils provide opportunities for parents to be more involved in the important work of enhancing all parents' engagement in their children's learning. School councils focus on the local school and community. PICs work at the board level to support parent engagement across the school board.

Parent Involvement Committees

The PIC acts as a direct link for parents to the director of education and the board of trustees. The PIC participates at the board level to support, encourage, and enhance the engagement of parents in improving student achievement and well-being. The PIC does this by providing information and advice to the board on parent engagement, communicating with and supporting school councils, and undertaking activities to help parents support their children's learning at home and at school.

The manner in which a PIC achieves these goals depends on the local needs of its board and community, and on how the PIC is organized.

School Councils

School councils are local bodies that support improved student achievement and well-being through the involvement of parents and enhance the accountability of the education system to parents. They advise principals and, where appropriate, school boards on issues affecting education programs and the operation of individual schools. School councils focus on increasing parent involvement within the school community as a key factor in improving student achievement and well-being.

2. K.L. Mapp, "Having Their Say: Parents Describe Why and How They Are Engaged in Their Children's Learning", *School Community Journal* 13, no. 1 (2002), pp. 35–64.

To achieve this goal, school councils work with the school principal to create a welcoming environment, increase opportunities for parents to provide input on and respond to school and board initiatives, identify barriers to parents' engagement in their children's education, and implement strategies to overcome the barriers.

Ontario's Parent Engagement Policy

Introduced in 2010, Ontario's parent engagement policy, as set out in the document *Parents in Partnership: A Parent Engagement Policy for Ontario Schools*, articulates a vision of parent engagement in Ontario schools. The policy recognizes that parent involvement is multi-dimensional and that parents have a role to play in fulfilling each of Ontario's core priorities for educational excellence. The policy identifies four key strategies designed to support parents as partners so that they have the opportunity – and the knowledge, skills, and tools – to work together with all education partners and contribute fully to the success of Ontario's students and our education system.

Ontario's Vision of Parent Engagement

In Ontario's education system, all partners acknowledge the positive impact of parent engagement on student achievement. Students are supported and inspired to learn in a culture of high expectations in which parents:

- ♦ are welcomed, respected, and valued by the school community as partners in their children's learning and development;
- ♦ have opportunities to be involved, and also a full range of choices about how to be involved, in the educational community to support student success;
- ♦ are engaged through ongoing communication and dialogue with other educational partners to support a positive learning environment at home and at school;
- ♦ are supported with the information and tools necessary to participate in school life.

Parents in Partnership: A Parent Engagement Policy for Ontario Schools, 2010, p. 7

Equally important, the policy acknowledges that developing effective parent engagement practices and programs requires action on the part of education partners at every level of the education system. Accordingly, it sets out actions for schools, school boards, and the Ministry of Education that will, individually and collectively, contribute to realizing Ontario's vision for parent engagement across the province.



TOOLS AND RESOURCES

Parents in Partnership: A Parent Engagement Policy for Ontario Schools is available on the ministry website at www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/parents/involvement/index.html.

Process and Procedure: Effective Practices

This section of the handbook highlights effective practices used by PICs and other successful committees across Ontario.

Characteristics of Effective PICs

Focusing on the Mandate

The PIC will provide advice to the director of education and trustees based on input received from parents, usually through school councils. Although the PIC may receive advice on a variety of issues, it must focus on those issues that fall within the parameters of its mandate.

Summary of Effective Practices

Effective PICs are those that:

- ◆ keep student achievement and well-being as their first priority;
- ◆ focus on the needs and interests of all students;
- ◆ are composed of members who represent the diversity of the board;
- ◆ are actively involved in assisting school councils in the areas of engaging parents in their children's education, creating a welcoming environment, and recognizing the diversity of the parents in their school community;
- ◆ promote effective, ongoing communication among all partners in education;
- ◆ establish a positive relationship with the director of education and trustees;
- ◆ provide feedback to parents, letting them know how their advice and ideas have been used;
- ◆ have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities;
- ◆ have a clear and consistent process for decision making and conflict resolution;
- ◆ are familiar with funding opportunities and resources provided by the Parent Engagement Office (PEO) of the Ministry of Education and with the initiatives of the PEO;
- ◆ maintain high ethical standards.

The complete version of this document can be found at the following web address:
<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/teachers/HandbookPIC.pdf>

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